

## Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters at a Water Distribution Site in Des Moines, Iowa

July 14, 1993

*The President.* Thank you very much. Let me just say, first of all, how very appreciative I am for the incredible work that has been done here in the last several days by the people of this State. I'm very proud of the contribution that has been made by all of the Federal Agencies, working in partnership with the people of Iowa, and I want to say a special word of appreciation for the Federal Emergency Management Agency and its Director, James Lee Witt, but also to the Agriculture Department. Secretary Espy is here with me for the second time in only 10 days, and I think his third trip to Iowa, and Mr. Witt is here. And your Senators and your congressional delegation, they're all here with us today. And Governor Branstad and I took a helicopter flight over the major portions of Des Moines and the surrounding area that have been hurt so badly.

Because I come from a State that's not all that different from Iowa, I have seen whole towns flooded, I have seen massive amounts of farmland flooded, but I've never seen anything on this scale before. And certainly, in my lifetime, anyway, to my knowledge there's never been an American city without water that was this large for this long a period of time.

I'm here today to view this damage, to talk to the members of the congressional delegation, to talk to the Governor and the other State officials of the people who are here working, and to do what I can to assure you that the victims of this disaster—and insofar as I, as President, can guarantee it—will be treated just like the victims of Hurricane Andrew or Hugo or the terrible devastation in Hawaii that my wife is visiting today from just several months ago. This is a very profound problem.

As you know, we have five States now, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Missouri, along with Iowa, that have been declared disasters. We have our Federal folks in South Dakota, which has had extensive crop damage, Kansas, and Nebraska, reviewing those States. We will present today a bill to the Congress for emergency assistance based on our best estimates of the damage reports that have been filed to date. But we know there will be several more

in, in the next few days, and I expect we'll have to revise all those numbers upward. We want to get the bill in today just to start movement on the bill. But as the damage reports come in over the next 4 to 5 days, I expect you'll see some revision upward in the numbers that the administration has asked for, both in the House and the Senate. And I want to say again, I'm going to do my best to make sure that the full reach of Federal assistance comes to the people of Iowa and to all the victims of this flood, and I'll be working closely with your congressional delegation to get that done.

But in the end, this is really a triumph of the spirit of the people of this State. I've been very moved by what I have seen not only from the helicopter but here in this parking lot today. And I want to say a special word of thanks to all those who have volunteered their time and who have come forward to help people in times of need, because that's really what America is all about. We've seen once again that we are capable of being a very strong family when we need to be, and it's a great tribute to your people. Thank you very much.

*Q.* Mr. President, there's a lot of desperate people here in Iowa, and Minnesota, Missouri, throughout the Midwest. What kinds of words on a personal level, words of encouragement, can you give them?

*The President.* Well, I can tell them that I have seen this sort of thing happen before in my own State. I've lived through this. I've seen people wiped out of their homes. And I talked to a lot of people here today who have lost everything they had in their homes, their businesses, their crops. And what I would say to them is we'll do what we can to help. But in the end, it is the inner strength of people and the support of the communities and families that will bring us through. But this will pass, and we have to keep looking to the future. That's what I sense in this crowd today, people who are willing to do that. I will do everything I can to make sure that this country does not forget about the people of Iowa and the other victims of the disaster, but we've just got to go on. We've got to pick up the pieces and

go on. That's what Americans do, and that's what we're going to have to do.

*Q.* Can you help out, Mr. President, without busting the budget?

*The President.* Oh, I think so. Keep in mind all these emergency appropriations do come as emergencies, that is, outside the budget. But you should be encouraged that since January because of our efforts to reduce the deficit in the next 5 years, because they've been successful, long-term interest rates have dropped rather dramatically. And our deficit this year is more than \$20 billion less than it was estimated to be when I took office.

So while a few billion dollars will add to it in this year, it will still be lower than everyone thought it was going to be, and it will not in any way affect the 5-year deficit reduction program now moving through Congress. So the people of Iowa don't need to feel guilty about taking this money; that's what it's there for. We've always done this. I think there is enormous bipartisan support in the Congress for this. There is no sense that this is something that should be held hostage to the budget negotia-

tions. And we're going to do just fine on that, I think.

*Q.* Mr. President, you were here 10 days ago. What are the differences now than 10 days ago when you were in Davenport?

*The President.* A lot more water over more of the State and a lot of residential and business damage in addition to the agricultural damage. It is very substantial, and it changes the mix of what our responsibilities are. It also makes it a little more difficult to calculate right now, so we will ask in this bill that will go before the Congress for a significant amount of money, several hundreds of millions of dollars in contingency appropriations, over and above anything we've proved in direct damages, because we can't know for sure at this moment, and we won't know next week, although we care for every last eligible disaster loss. And that's very different from the way it was before.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. at the HyVee Food and Drug Store in the South Ridge Shopping Center. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Interview With Jan Mickelson of WHO Radio in Des Moines July 14, 1993

### *Midwest Flooding*

*Mr. Mickelson.* Mr. President, 1040 WHO Radio, KLYF-FM, and TV-13 welcomes you to Iowa and the Nation's heartland. Thank you for coming.

You spent the morning and the midday touring the wreckage and the damage, flood damage. Give us some of your impressions, sir.

*The President.* I did have the opportunity to tour, first of all, by helicopter. I spent about a half an hour flying over the Des Moines area, and then I stopped in a supermarket lot where water was being distributed. I talked to people who had lost everything in their houses, they've lost their businesses, people who obviously have had their farms flooded out. It was a very moving thing. I talked to parents who were worried about their children and whether they could get adequate water and how they were going to do that safely. And some of them had been

able to send their children to relatives in other communities; some had not.

But the spirit of the people seemed pretty undaunted. Several people broke down, and they were very choked up, but they were resolute. And I think that, as terrible as these things are, in some ways they bring out the best in people. I saw an enormous number of people who had just stopped their lives and come in to volunteer and help other people deal with their problems.

I will say this: This is a different sort of emergency than I saw 10 days ago when I came to Iowa and Illinois. It's gone beyond the flooding of farmland, obviously, to the destruction of a lot of homes and businesses and the public safety issue here with the water. Your people I think have done a very good job working with the Federal agencies and the State people, and I was very impressed by that.